

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Emergency Order No. 1-RS-B-9-04

Issued at Craig, Tuesday, June 8, 2004

Effective 12:01 a.m.
Date: Monday, June 14, 2004

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Saturday, July 31, 2004. Unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order reduces the sport fishing bag limit in Sweetwater Lake and Hatchery Creek on Prince of Wales Island for sockeye salmon 16 inches or longer, from 6 fish daily to 3 fish daily from Monday, June 14, 2004 at 12:01 am to Saturday, July 31, at 11:59 p.m. In addition it closes a portion of Hatchery Creek to sport fishing from Monday, June 14, 2004 at 12:01 am to Saturday, July 31, at 11:59 p.m. The closed area encompasses both the upper and lower falls on Hatchery Creek near river mile 1, over a distance of approximately 260 meters. The closed area extends from a department marker located approximately 100 feet upstream of the upper falls at the end of the U.S. Forest Service board walk, to a department marker located approximately 100 feet downstream of the lower falls.

REGULATION:

Notwithstanding **5 AAC 47.023 Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the fresh waters of the Southeast Alaska Area**, the following provisions are effective:

5 AAC 47.023 Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the fresh waters of the Southeast Alaska Area.

(k) In the Prince of Wales Island vicinity:

(8) In Sweetwater Lake and Hatchery Creek, the bag limit for sockeye salmon 16 inches or longer is three fish. In Hatchery Creek, fishing is closed from a department marker located approximately 100 feet upstream of the upper falls at the end of the U.S. Forest Service board walk, to a department marker located approximately 100 feet downstream of the lower falls.

JUSTIFICATION:

Upstream salmon migration in Hatchery Creek is partially obstructed by two falls at river mile 1. As a result salmon concentrate below the falls where they become vulnerable to harvest by sport and personal use fishermen, before migrating upstream to spawning areas. State Wide Harvest Survey data and on site observations made by department staff indicate an increase in sport fishing effort and sockeye salmon catch and harvest at the Hatchery Creek falls over the past decade. As fishing pressure increases and emergency order restrictions have been implement near the falls, more anglers have been observed shifting to other areas of the stream to harvest sockeye. Similar trends have been observed in the personal use fishery, and department staff has observed an apparent decline in the number of returning sockeye over this same time period through on site observations. If these trends continue, sockeye salmon run strength will be insufficient to meet escapement needs in the Hatchery Creek drainage.

ADF&G staff observed no fish during surveys at the falls June 2 and June 6. These observations indicate a much lower level of abundance than during other recent years when sockeye have been observed jumping at the falls by the first week of June. This emergency order is necessary to ensure that

escapement needs are met; personal use fishing restrictions are being implemented concurrently through changes to personal use permits that reduce the number of days per week open to personal use fishers. By limiting the sport fishing closure to a small time and area where and when sockeye are the most vulnerable to harvest and mortality and reducing bag limits in the remainder of the system, exploitation rates will be substantially reduced while continuing to provide a reduced level of angling opportunity in the remainder of the watershed.

DISTRIBUTION:

The distribution list for this emergency order is on file at the Region 1 Office of Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport Fish, P. O. Box 240020, Douglas, AK 99824, (907) 465-4270; at the Ketchikan Area Office, 2030 Sea Level Drive, Suite 207, Ketchikan, AK 99901, (907) 225-2859; and at the Prince of Wales Island Area Office, P.O. Box 682 Craig, AK 99921, (907) 826-2498.

Kevin C. Duffy
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Steven McCurdy
Prince of Wales Area Management Biologist